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SERMON,

PREACHED IN

THE CATHEDRAL CHURCH

OF

Hereford,

OCTOBER 25, 1795,

BEING

THE ANNIVERSARY OF HIS MAJESTY'S ACCESSION TO THE THRONE OF THESE KINGDOMS.

BY

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CANON RESIDENTIARY OF THE CATHEDRAL CHURCH OF HEREFORD,
AND CHAPLAIN TO HIS ROYAL HIGHNESS
THE DUKE OF GLOCESTER.

PUBLISHED AT THE REQUEST OF
THE LORD BISHOP OF THE DIOCESE.

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BRITISH MUSEUM

TO

HIS ROYAL HIGHNESS

THE DUKE OF GLOCESTER,

THIS SERMON

IS INSCRIBED,

WITH GREAT RESPECT,

BY

HIS DUTIFUL HUMBLE SERVANT,

THE AUTHOR.

PROV. XXIV. 21.

MY SON, FEAR THOU THE LORD AND THE KING, AND MEDDLE NOT WITH THEM THAT ARE GIVEN TO CHANGE.

THERE is not, in the hiſtory of the world, any example of a Community which has not aſſociated ſome form of Religion with its Civil Eſtabliſhment, and made the fear of God the foundation of obedience to the State. If we except a few individuals of queſtionable veracity or deranged intellect, the exiſtence of a Deity is a conviction uniformly and indelibly ſtamped upon the human mind. His reaſon is not a more univerſal, perhaps not ſo differential

a character of man, as his ſenſe of Religion. The progreſſive exerciſe of his faculties leads him from the Univerſe to its Author; from his own precarious dependent being to a ſelf-exiſtent firſt cauſe of all things, whoſe Almighty power and infinite wiſdom created and governs the world; whoſe goodneſs has placed him in it, in order to make him happy, and by whoſe juſtice every rational, that is, every accountable creature, muſt, he perceives, be finally judged. The contemplation of theſe attributes of the Deity, will neceſſarily excite in the human mind ſentiments of awe and reverence:—Man, poſſeſſed of moral liberty, free to chuſe good or evil, liable conſequently to reward or puniſhment, and conſcious at the ſame time of thoſe imperfections which he inherits by the conſtitution, or by the corruption of his nature, muſt fear a God of purity, whoſe deſigns, however planned in infinite mercy, muſt be accompliſhed according to the laws of his immutable juſtice.

The will of this ſupreme Lord of heaven and earth, whether diſcovered by reaſon or communicated

municated by revelation, becomes then of right the rule of man's conduct in whatever circumſtances he may be placed, and binds him to the performance of the general duties of Religion and Morality. But man is not formed for ſolitude, in which he would experience wants which he could not relieve, and propenſities which he could not gratify; his ſocial affections are among the moſt active and eſſential principles of his nature, neceſſary to his well-being, probably to his exiſtence; he perceives therefore that he is intended for a ſocial, as well as for a religious ſtate; and as ſociety never did or can ſubſiſt without ſome form of Civil Government, ſome authoritative regulation of opinions and paſſions hoſtile to its welfare; political laws, the ordinances of man, become by the conſtitution of human nature (in other words, by the appointment of God, the author of that nature) another, ſubordinate, rule of man's duty; a ſubordinate rule, becauſe it is obvious it muſt not contravene that ſupreme authority from which it is derived: ſubject to that controul alone, it binds

the conduct and the conſciences of all among whom any ſuch rule is eſtabliſhed.

Political conſtitutions are indeed, or ſhould be, no more than ſpecific applications of the general principles of Religion and Morality to determinate objects, to the particular relations and exigencies of civil life; and they may be as various as the tempers, habits, characters, or even as the intereſts, ſituation, and climate of the countries which adopt them. Religion interferes not with forms of government, but leaves them to the will and wiſdom of the different nations of the earth; and when their choice has eſtabliſhed them, it preſcribes obedience to the laws themſelves, and reſpect to the perſons of thoſe who frame or execute them; and it exacts this obedience, and this reſpect, not only under the ſanction of legal penalty, but upon the ſtronger ground of moral obligation —"not only for wrath, but alſo for conſcience "ſake." In this ſenſe, and with theſe obvious limitations, we underſtand St. Peter when he ſays, "Submit yourſelves to every ordinance "of man for the Lord's ſake, whether it be

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" unto the King, as ſupreme, or unto Go-
" vernours, as unto them that are ſent by
" him for the puniſhment of evil-doers and for
" the praiſe of them that do well:" And St. Paul, alſo, when he directs—" Let every ſoul
" be ſubject unto the higher powers, for there
" is no power but of God; the powers that be
" are ordained of God; whoſoever, therefore,
" reſiſteth the power, reſiſteth the ordinance
" of God."

The Laws of Religion and of the State become thus joint principles of obligation upon man, and their union may be truly and philoſophically ſaid to be formed by the hand of God. They are allies engaged in the ſame ſervice againſt vice their common enemy; aſſociated guardians of public and private happineſs, which will then only be ſecure when the reſtraints of legal authority are ſtrengthened by the ſanctions of Religion. Civil Government has, indeed, been the nurſing-mother of Art and Science—has made large additions to the comforts and conveniences of life, and created all its elegant pleaſures; but it has

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added ſtrength alſo to temptation, and violence to our appetites by increaſing the value of their objects; and the ſelfiſh and unſocial paſſions have been inflamed even to madneſs by the heightened attractions of exorbitant opulence and luxurious pleaſure. Could it be ſuppoſed, contrary to fact, that Fraud could not in any inſtance evade, nor Sophiſtry pervert, the meaning of Human Laws; that Wealth could never corrupt the Miniſters of them, nor Power bear down their authority; yet the headlong impetuoſity of Reſentment, the deliberate malice of Revenge, the wild ſpirit of Ambition, the inſatiate cravings of Avarice, would, for the ſake of preſent gratification, brave their ultimate ſeverity, when it was believed only to anticipate a certain, and no very diſtant, period of annihilation. It is not agreeable to probability or experience, that men under the influence of ſuch furious paſſions ſhould "be afraid of them that kill the body, "if there be no one to fear, who, after that "he hath killed, hath power to caſt both ſoul "and body into hell."—Again, in the infinite variety

variety of the human character, of "hearts "hardened in unbelief and ſtrengthened in "wickedneſs," there are whom diſtant danger, and a future day of retribution deter not, but who nevertheleſs will tremble at impending preſent vengeance; it becomes expedient therefore, to arm the civil power with the ſword of juſtice, that "ſinners may hear and "fear, and do no more wickedly."

The glorious and enviable privilege of the people of this land is a Conſtitution in Church and State, pure in its ſpiritual, generous in its political frame; happily balanced between the extremes of Superſtition and Fanaticiſm, of Anarchy and Deſpotiſm. That perfect form of Government which an ingenious hiſtorian of antiquity could combine only in his imagination, but of whoſe actual exiſtence he deſpaired, is preſented to the heart and underſtanding of every Briton, as the bulwark of his rights and the boundary of his duty: He has the ineſtimable happineſs to live under a curiouſly framed and nicely adjuſted Government, which unites the ſeparate excellencies of each ſimple form;

—which directs the good intentions of popular virtue by the counſels of ſenatorial wiſdom and by the energy of monarchical power. The reciprocal duties of protection and obedience, the juſt limits between liberty and reſtraint, are diſtinctly marked; the intereſts of Religion and Virtue are ſecurely guarded, and at the ſame time Freedom of Opinion and Conſcience indulged without reſerve. It is not a baſeleſs fabric raiſed by the hands of raſh or ignorant projectors, but it is the aggregate wiſdom and labour of ages, gradually formed upon, and incorporated with, our national manners and character. It has been aſſailed in vain by the ſtorms of faction, and it has repelled the rage of tyrants: It has ſurvived the violence of open enemies, and the treachery of pretended friends; and has emerged with additional purity and luſtre from the mine of corruption, and from the furnace of affliction. Its triumphs, too, have been regularly crowned by ſome nearer advances of the Church to the genuine Religion of Chriſt; ſome new extenſion or ſecurity of Civil Liberty.

berty. Fidelity to ſuch a Conſtitution becomes our duty, from the concurrent motives of religious principle and patriotic affection:—Thoſe "who fear God and the King, will not med-"dle with them that are given to change."

Imperfection, it is true, neceſſarily adheres to every human inſtitution; time will produce or diſcover parts that are defective or decayed; and it is the ſingular merit of our own admirable Conſtitution, that they may be ſupplied or renewed without changing its form, or injuring its ſubſtance. A good citizen will not, however, for a vague proſpect of uncertain advantage, hazard ſure and invaluable bleſſings; in times more eſpecially of domeſtic turbulence and foreign danger, he will ſubmit his own opinions to the public wiſdom; and if unity of ſentiment or of ſpirit, be not attainable, he will not violate the bonds of peace. It is not eaſy to calculate the effect, and foreſee the conſequences, of any meditated change upon the various relations and nice dependencies of an ancient and complicated eſtabliſhment; nor can the moſt prudent advocate of reform be ſecure

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that intentions originally temperate will not be inflamed by conteſt, and lead to deſtruction. The portentous revolution of a great neighbouring nation, which now deſolates the earth, muſt have duly impreſſed theſe truths upon the minds of all who have had leiſure to contemplate the conduct and calamities of that deluded people. They had undoubtedly abuſes to reform, and grievances to redreſs, and even fundamental errors to correct in the ſtructure of their ancient political fabric; but the ſpirit of innovation raiſed other ſpirits worſe and more wicked than itſelf: A torrent of irreligion and popular fury, fomented always by ſome artful demagogue, forced the authors of the firſt ſalutary meaſures beyond their original purpoſe; and their well-intentioned partial reformation of abuſes, terminated in the actual and total deſtruction of themſelves and of their country.

" Meddle not," then, " with them that are " given to change;" ſay, rather, in the virtuous ſpirit of your forefathers, *Nolumus Leges Angliæ mutari.* Where the path is unexplored, the

the footing will be unſure, and it is much better to weigh conſequences than to hazard experiments; to abide by eſtabliſhed forms and principles, than to truſt to the ſpirit of innovation, the prolific parent of error and of crime.

We have a Conſtitution which will juſtify the warmeſt attachment to its intereſts, and the moſt ſtrenuous exertions in its defence. The virtue of our anceſtors, under the guidance and protection of Providence, has tranſmitted to us hereditary Monarchy as an eſſential form of that Conſtitution; and we have a Monarch, who, by the public laws he has enacted, and by the example of his private life, has approved himſelf to be, both by inclination and principle, the zealous friend and protector of pure Religion and political Liberty. Popular topics of diſcontent will never be wanted in a mixed government, by thoſe who wiſh to diſſeminate them; and the madneſs of the people, like the waves of the ſea, may be agitated by a breath—like them, too, when the ſtorm increaſeth, "they are mighty and rage

"hor-

" horribly." We need not to be told, that the ravages of war are diſtreſsful to humanity, and that our burthens are grievous to be borne; we know, we feel, that they are; but we bear them with patience, from a conviction of the neceſſity of them; we look forward with hope to that period when they may be diſcontinued with ſafety—when we ſhall no longer have to fear the deſtruction of our national eſtate, by the enemies of all ſocial order and of all religious comfort—by thoſe who, " having ſaid in " their heart there is no God, having trodden " down the ſanctuary, and counted the blood " of the covenant an unholy thing," have laid the Conſtitution of their country in ruins, after tearing from it, with every aggravated circumſtance of cruelty and horror, its principal ſupport and ornament.

" Meddle not," then, " with them that are " given to change."—It is not our's " to bind " princes at our pleaſure, and to teach ſenators " wiſdom; to be deſpiſers of dominion, and " to ſpeak evil of dignities." Fidelity to the Conſtitution is the genuine character of pub-

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lic virtue, the only ſure principle of national reformation, or of national ſecurity. Accuſtom yourſelves, my brethren, to regard with affection and reverence that Eſtabliſhment under which your fathers have enjoyed, for a longer term than can be paralleled in the hiſtory of mankind, the ineſtimable bleſſings of Civil and Religious Liberty, which has diffuſed them to the remoteſt extremities of the globe, and will, under the favour of Heaven, perpetuate them to you and to your lateſt poſterity. Bear with magnanimity evils of determinate extent till they can be remedied with ſafety; nor ceaſe to be ſubjects from the vain fear of becoming ſlaves. "Stu-
" dy to be quiet, and to do your own buſi-
" neſs, to lead an orderly and a peaceable,
" an honeſt and a godly life, rendering to all
" their dues—cuſtom to whom cuſtom, fear to
" whom fear, honour to whom honour is due;
" unto Cæſar the things which are Cæſar's,
" and unto God the things that are God's."

THE END.

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